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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

La philosophie moderne. ABEL REY. Paris: Ernest Flammarion. 1908. Pp. 369.

It is the purpose of this book to present " a summary statement of the form which the great problems of philosophy assume at the present time." The original physiognomy of modern philosophy is a result of the intimate connection between philosophy and science. Instead of ignoring the accomplishments of scientific activity, according to the manner of the preceding epoch, the philosophy of to-day takes as a point of departure of its inquiries the results of positive knowledge. Leaving aside all isolated attempts at solution, we have the general tendency of theoretic activity expressed in the antithesis of "scientism" and pragmatism. Either scientific method is the only path to the attainment of truth (positivism, rationalism, "scientism") or there are other sources of true knowledge, such as " religious feeling, moral ideas, sentimental intuitions." According to this latter point of view, science is an artifice whose sole validity consists in its practical utility. The current of ideas representing this movement is synthetized under the expression "pragmatism." It is the essential thesis of this study to oppose " scientism " to pragmatism.

The method to be followed in this examination of contemporary philosophical problems is indicated by the characteristic intimate connection between philosophy and science already noted as the original physiognomy of modern philosophy. Each chapter of this book is devoted to a special problem, and is at the same time concerned with a fundamental science, or rather with the value of the particular science, the objective knowledge it can give us. Chapters II., III., IV., V., VI., VII. are concerned, respectively, with the problem of number and extension (the quantitative properties of matter), the problem of matter, the problem of life, the problem of mind, the moral problem, the problem of knowledge and of truth. The fundamental query throughout these discussions presents itself as follows: Is knowledge merely a consequence of practical activity, and is truth to be identified with that which succeeds? or is success a result of science because knowledge is of real relations? While it is the primary aim of the author to give an unbiased outline of the existing condition of the discussion as manifested in the general problem of each science, he briefly indicates his own conclusion upon the subject in favor of the scientific or positivistic point of view as against the teaching of pragmatism. He affirms that the knowledge to be obtained by means of scientific method is satisfactory to his own requirements, but admits that there may be other needs for other natures.

We shall mention briefly some conclusions in the successive chapters. Mathematics, originating in experience, gives us knowledge of certain groups of real relations (order, number, extension). These once obtained, the scientist may proceed to manipulate them in an arbitrary manner, but the results of such manipulation apply to experience because of their foundation in original real elements. The author remarks that pragmatists have been frequently mistaken in claiming the teachings of scientists to be evidence of the theory of pragmatism. For example, Poincaré, instead of being a pragmatist, is too little of a pragmatist, since he does not require that arbitrary creation must refer back to experience if it is to be valid.

The problem of matter is one of experimental inquiry. Physics gives us knowledge of a more complex set of relations than those of mathematics.

The physicochemical theory of life gains ground every day and points to the conclusion that life is an *ensemble* of relations more rich and complex than those of matter and attached to the mechanical and physicochemical relations.

In the imperfect state of psychological science, the burden of attainment appears to promise conclusions the same as in the other domains of knowledge. Psychological science will consist "in establishing not only necessary relations between the different manifestations of psychological life, but also between these and certain manifestations of the biological life and certain actions of the environment." Pragmatism has rendered an important service in putting mind in nature.

Morality has nothing in common with theoretic speculation. It is an art, and must utilize the science concerned with the manners of men.

With respect to the problem of truth, there appear to be indications of the following solution: Relations, not terms, are given first in knowledge. Experience shows us the transformation of condition to conditioned. Science is not true because it succeeds, but succeeds because it is true.

In Chapter VII. the author presents the general conclusion as to the nature of philosophy. Science and philosophy differ not in object nor in method, but in point of view, the philosophical point of view being distinguished by being more general. It is the province of philosophy to coordinate the results of the sciences and to originate the general hypotheses for the sciences as a whole.

The style of the book is clear and concise, and the whole is interesting reading. One feels that the endeavor at impartial statement of positions has, on the whole, been accomplished. The discussions of the philosophic positions of the various sciences are illuminating. In the opinion of the reviewer the sketch of the theory of pragmatism appears to be mainly influenced by the movement of thought in France, although important reference is made to William James and the Anglo-American movement. This may account for the extreme emphasis upon the philosophic activity of the scientists. Thus some arguments cited as adverse to the contentions of pragmatism seem to be in harmony with recent technical discussions of the subject. However, the omission of such material may have been necessitated by the summary and synthetic character of the study.

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Elementary Experiments in Psychology. CARL E. SEASHORE. Henry Holt & Co. 1908. Pp. xi + 218.

The difficulty of developing an experimental attitude toward mental processes and of securing an adequate acquaintance with the spirit and methods of the experimental investigation of mental phenomena is presumably encountered by most teachers of large introductory classes in psychology. In the absence of a satisfactory manual of elementary experiments to accompany the text-book and lectures, students rarely get a first-hand acquaintance with mental processes and a real appreciation of methods of studying them. The result is that, while they may all learn much about psychology, they do not form the habit of psychologizing. A few may get the psychological attitude, but it is safe to say that the majority do not. Such class demonstrations as are practicable give crude results and are unsatisfactory. They may amuse and interest, but they are not particularly instructive. The time, labor, and expense involved in giving a large class actual laboratory practise, even with a well-equipped laboratory, makes this method of introduction to modern psychology impracticable.

For these reasons, to which every teacher will no doubt agree, there is a definite need for such a manual as Professor Seashore's "Elementary Experiments in Psychology." It is a valuable addition to the handbooks in psychology, and ought to be warmly welcomed in every quarter. The purpose of the book, as set forth in the author's preface, is "to meet the requirements for a series of experiments in the first course in psychology. It makes individual experiments, as opposed to class demonstrations, practicable, regardless of laboratory facilities or the size of the class. The student is given means and encouragement for pursuing each problem intensively in order that he may acquire independence of thought and action, realize the actuality of mental processes, and get here and there a vision of the vastness, the orderliness, the practical significance, and the charms of mental life."

This purpose of the book is admirably fulfilled. Great pedagogical skill and ingenuity are shown in the planning of simple experiments, which, if properly carried out, are sure to train the student in habits of introspection, to give him a knowledge of psychology as an experimental science and to arouse an interest in the solution of its problems. The experiments are well selected, can easily be made by one student alone or by two working together, except the experiment on reaction-time; they require very little apparatus, or such as can be readily obtained, and yet are adequate to illustrate psychological principles and give insight into methods of their study. The directions to the student are clear, concise, and unambiguous, and the brief discussions of the experiments are stimulating and suggestive.